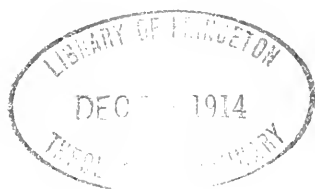


# CAN WE STILL FOLLOW JESUS?

Alfred E. Garvie, M.A., DD.



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Can we still follow Jesus?





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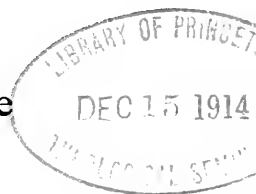
A Study of the Teaching of Jesus  
in its Modern Applications

By

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**Alfred E. Garvie**

M.A. (Oxon.), D.D. (Glas.)

Principal of New College, London



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## Preface

THIS volume consists of five lectures, four of which were delivered in connection with the Ancient Merchant Lectures in Lyndhurst Road Church, London, in January and February, and all five in Wycliffe Congregational Church, Hull, under the auspices of the Congregational Board, in April. They have been prepared for publication in response to the request of a number of the hearers; and in sending them forth to a wider circle of readers the writer desires to dedicate the volume to the hearers who, by their keen attention and warm appreciation, helped him in their delivery as lectures and have encouraged him in their issue as a book which, it is hoped, will find as generous a reception from the readers as from the hearers.

*New College, London.*

## Introduction

THE question which this volume seeks to answer is not a vain inquiry, but is of urgent interest and commanding importance for Christian thought and life to-day, as the authority of Jesus as Teacher and Master is being questioned in two ways. Not only is there *the practical challenge* of the constant failure of the community which bears His name to realise His ideal in act, and to recognise in thought all that His ideal involves ; but we are confronted with *the theoretical challenge* of the adequacy, finality, and adaptability of His teaching in the world as it is now. The first challenge will be referred to only incidentally in exhibiting the modern applications of the teaching of Jesus ; but the second challenge will be fully discussed in the pages that follow.

It is evident that it is impossible, within

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the limits of this volume, to refer to all the phases of modern thought which either misinterpret or oppose the words of the Master ; but an endeavour will be made to deal at least with those questions regarding the teaching of Jesus which go to the very core of His ideal, and therefore touch the very heart of Christian loyalty and obedience to Him.

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## CHAPTER I

### DOES RELIGION SPOIL MORALITY ?

(1) IN the earlier stages of the development of both religion and morality there appears to be not only no connection, but even sometimes a conflict between them, when religion continues to sanction practices that morality in its progress comes to condemn. The outburst of Lucretius: "*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*" ("To so great evils could religion persuade") is not the only instance of the criticism of ritual by conscience. The same opposition meets us in the attitude of the Hebrew prophets to the popular religion. But in the Christian religion morality is inseparable from it. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the holy love of God; the eternal divine perfection has been mani-

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fested in the perfect human personality. The faith of man, which claims the grace of God, lays hold on the holiness no less than on the love. Forgiveness is the motive of, and finds its fulfilment in, holiness. Whatever severance of morality from religion there may have been in perverted doctrine and corrupted practice in the Christian Church, the teaching of Jesus joins them together in a bond that cannot be severed. Not only does He enjoin love for man as well as for God as the first and chief commandment; but the human brotherhood, which is the supreme ideal of the Christian morality, is the issue and expression of the divine Fatherhood, which is the ultimate reality for the Christian religion.

(2) As the definition of faith in Heb. xi. 1, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen," clearly indicates, the future as well as the invisible is included in the interests of religion, which seeks certainty not only in regard to the divine reality, but also as regards the human destiny. In the Christian

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gospel life and immortality are brought to light, as well as God and duty. If human duty is dependent on divine relationship, no less is the present opportunity and obligation connected with and affected by the future destiny of man. The relation of Christian morality with the Christian faith in God and the Christian hope in immortality is to-day made a matter for reproach. The Christian religion has been taunted with its "other-worldliness" on the assumption that the hope of heaven diverts attention from the duties, and creates indifference to the needs of earth. There are ethical societies in all our cities, whose aim is morality without any religious sanctions, on the assumption that the difficulties of religious belief can be avoided while the urgency of moral duties can be maintained, and that morality gains nothing—and may even lose much—from its association with religion. It need hardly be said that such a view assails the very citadel of the Christian faith, for which God, duty, and immortality are inseparably, because essentially, conjoined.

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(3) Within the present generation this objection has been directed particularly against one element in the teaching of Jesus ; and with this we are here primarily concerned, although in dealing with it we shall be led back to the more general issue. The publication in 1910 of the English translation of a book by Albert Schweitzer, under the title " The Quest of the Historical Jesus," gave popular currency to a discussion which had begun eighteen years before in Germany. Johannes Weiss, in his book " Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes " (" The Preaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God "), published in 1892, sought to prove that for Jesus Himself the Kingdom of God, the coming of which He preached, was entirely future, eschatological, and transcendent. Wrede, in his book " Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien " (" The Secret of the Messiah in the Gospels ") which appeared in 1901, went a step farther and sought to show that Mark's representation of Jesus as Messiah is a literary fiction. The purpose of the work of Schweitzer is to shut up



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modern theology to the one alternative of thorough-going scepticism of the historical reality of Jesus, or thorough-going eschatology—that is, the view of the Kingdom of God advocated by Weiss. A similar view has gained still wider diffusion by the brilliant volume of Loisy, “*L’Evangile et l’Église*” (“The Gospel and the Church”), published in 1892, and translated in 1908; and was adopted by Father Tyrrell in his posthumous volume, “*Christianity at the Cross Roads*,” which appeared in 1909.

(4) It would be altogether beyond the purpose of this book to deal fully with the important and interesting discussion of this question, which is still going on; it will suffice to indicate briefly the view of the Kingdom of God which is being ascribed to Jesus, and the bearing of this view on His practical teaching. Those who represent this tendency do not agree among themselves in all points; but it is possible to state the main position without dealing with these minor differences. It is held that Jesus was dependent in His views of the Kingdom of God on the apocalyptic

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ideas which prevailed in the Judaism around Him, and that consequently what is in agreement with these ideas in His teaching can alone be accepted as authentic, while all that goes beyond or rises above them must be ascribed to later developments of thought in the Christian Church. In the view of Jesus, after the reports of His teaching have been sifted by such a critical process, the Kingdom of God appears as *future*, and He does not and cannot regard Himself as its founder, but only as the herald of its coming. Further His conception is *eschatological*; the Kingdom is conceived as the consummation of human history, and thus His teaching about the Kingdom may be regarded as His doctrine of the last things. Finally, as the Kingdom is *transcendent* in nature, an altogether new order of human existence, its coming must be supernatural in character; as it is not a new moral and religious order in the present world, which can be brought by human progress in faith and duty, it must be established by a supernatural act of God, which, however, is dependent on

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one human condition—man's receptivity for it in penitence and faith. The object of Jesus' preaching was not only to reveal the nature and announce the coming of the Kingdom, but to secure this one human condition. It was only when His preaching failed to evoke the penitence and faith necessary that He resolved to offer His own life as the ransom for it. It is doubtful whether Jesus regarded Himself in His earthly life as the Messiah, as anything more than a prophet ; it is probable that He expected to become Messiah in power and glory at the establishment of the Kingdom.

(5) As this expectation so dominates all the teaching of Jesus it is inferred that what He taught cannot be regarded as of universal and permanent validity, but must be treated as "a penitential discipline" or "an interim ethic." It is this depreciation of the value and significance of the teaching of Jesus in consequence of the conception of the Kingdom of God attributed to Him in this theory that gives to the question, How did Jesus think of

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the Kingdom of God ? such crucial importance. We must now try to answer these questions : What measure of truth is there in this theory ? What is its error (if any) ? Even if Jesus held the view assigned to Him, does the inference regarding the validity of His teaching necessarily follow ? What bearing has the influence of Jesus' hope of the coming of the Kingdom on His teaching or the meaning and worth of that teaching to-day ?

(6) It must be frankly acknowledged that the Christian Church in its theology has hitherto not adequately recognised the prominence, and even the dominance, of the idea of the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus ; and it is well for us to be recalled to the Gospels to realise how large a place, and how great a part, the preaching of the Kingdom has in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Again, it is all to the good that we should be forbidden to put our own meaning on the term, thus covering with the authority of Jesus local and temporary phases of Christian thought ; and be compelled to ask our-

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selves what Jesus Himself meant to teach us by the term, as we shall probably discover, when we interrogate Jesus Himself, that it means something more and other than the religious good of the forgiveness of sin, or the moral duty of love to God and man, or an improved social order, to which it has sometimes been narrowed down. Nor, lastly, need we take exception even to the endeavour to bring to bear on the view of Jesus all the light that contemporary Jewish thought may cast upon it, for it is no interest of Christian faith so to isolate Jesus from His own time and people as to put Him out of touch with its needs, aims, and hopes. Even if we claim that He has a message for all mankind in all ages, yet He addressed His teaching immediately to the people whom He gathered around Him, and therefore used the terms that would be intelligible and persuasive to them.

(7) When, giving due weight to these considerations, we go to the Gospels, we discover that what has been called the liberal Protestant view, as represented in

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Harnack's now famous book, "What is Christianity?" has not taken due account of all the evidence. Jesus was not merely a teacher of a religious idea and a moral ideal which commend themselves to the human reason and conscience always and everywhere; but not only did He stand in a prophetic succession, the function of which was to interpret God's providence in human history, but He also knew Himself to be fulfilling a divine purpose, to which His predecessors had borne witness. That Jesus anticipated a decisive divine intervention in human history, as did the prophets who came before Him, the evidence of the Gospels makes it quite impossible for us to doubt, even if there may still be some question as to the extent and the manner in which He anticipated that intervention. We cannot and need not take His teaching with precise literalness, as, on the one hand, much of His language is borrowed from prophetic literature; and, on the other, it is the characteristic of prophecy to use figurative terms, for how otherwise could the speech

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of one age express the condition of another? We must allow even that the primitive Christian community may, in its lively hope of the second coming, have given greater precision to some of His sayings than these at first possessed. But these considerations do not affect our general conclusion regarding His view.

(8) That view has been stated by Prof. Hogg in his book, "The Teaching of Jesus Regarding the Kingdom." For Jesus, the supremacy of the divine truth and grace, with all the perfection, glory, and blessedness which it must bring to man, was already a present reality as yet transcending the existing order of the world, but to be manifested by God's supernatural act in that world as soon as man by repentance and faith was ready to receive its blessings. Thus His prophecy regarding the coming of the Kingdom was conditional, as is all prophecy, where God's action depends on man's fulfilment of certain necessary conditions. He was not mistaken as regards God's will to save and bless mankind; but He was disappointed

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by man's failure to receive in penitence and faith all that God was offering in grace. When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as imminent, it is His knowledge of God's will which gives Him this confidence. When He, as in some of the parables, suggests the delays and hindrances of the coming of the Kingdom, it is man's slow progress which is oppressing His spirit. It is altogether consistent with the conditions of the Incarnation that His mind should thus waver between the certainty which His knowledge of God inspired and the doubt which His experience of man suggested. And if we duly take into account these two elements in His view and hope, the difficulty that the seemingly conflicting aspects of His teaching raises will be removed.

(9) Having thus recognised the truth there is in this theory, we may now look at the error it contains.

The error is threefold.

In the first place, the originality of Jesus as a genius of the first order in the realm of morality and religion (to put His



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claims in the lowest terms which history, even apart from Christian faith, will allow) is ignored. It is only an assumption, and an assumption which has no warrant, that Jesus' view must be limited by the range of Jewish Apocalypse, whether prophetic prediction or popular expectation. If He at all rose above the limitations of His own age and people in His view of God and man, there is no reason for limiting His conception of the Kingdom of God, in which God and man are mutually related, by the common beliefs. Nay, an advance in regard to the idea of God and the ideal of man would necessarily involve progress in the expectation of the Kingdom of God. The whole range of Jesus' teaching must be placed on a lower level of moral insight and spiritual discernment if this theory is to be accepted; and this would involve the exclusion from the authentic teaching of Jesus of not only the sayings which suggest a slow progress of the Kingdom, but of the greater part of His teaching about God and man, which gives to Him His unique place as a Teacher.

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Accordingly, in the next place, this theory involves so radical a criticism of the Gospels that their general historical trustworthiness is brought into doubt. Instead of the eschatological theory being a refuge from scepticism, it involves a criticism that can end only in scepticism as to whether we can know anything for certain about the historical Jesus. If we must deny the authenticity of every saying which is inconsistent with the narrow limits that this theory sets to the mind of Jesus, we are left with an historical reality which is far too inadequate to explain the mighty and enduring influence which this one personality has exercised, and is still exercising, in human history.

But, lastly, if it be said that what has produced Christendom is not the historical Jesus with His teaching and example, but what the faith of the Christian community has made of Him as the Living Christ, we must then urge that this view makes the primitive community greater morally and spiritually than the Founder it confessed. If the sayings of Jesus which offer

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the truer idea of God, and the worthier ideal of man which distinguish the Christian from other religions, are not authentic, but reflect the thought and life of the Christian Church, then we have the contradiction of a community which was on the one hand so much wiser and better than its Founder that it could morally and religiously advance above Him, and yet either so ignorant or so dishonest that it could ascribe to Him what belonged to itself. But such a movement as Christianity demands not only a great personality as its source, but even a personality much greater than the community that confesses Him Saviour and Lord.

(10) We can now turn to our third question: Even if Jesus had, without such qualification as we have insisted on, held the view of the Kingdom as future, transcendent, and supernatural, does it follow that His practical teaching must be regarded as a *penitential discipline* and an *interim ethic*? That Jesus called men to penitence is not denied; but penitence does not exhaust His requirements of men. He

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calls them to the imitation of the divine perfection as well as the renunciation of all evil. Any moral order, even one in which only a gradual moral progress is required of men, must urge the negative as well as the positive demand, the turning from evil to good. Can love, sacrifice, forgiveness be regarded as having only the value of a *penitential discipline*, and not as essential elements of any moral ideal of permanent and universal validity?

Still more unjustified is the suggestion of the phrase, an *interim ethic*; for surely the ethic which made man fit to receive the Kingdom of God would be of the same moral and spiritual quality as the Kingdom itself, and that no other or lower than the eternal perfection of God Himself. Unless it be denied that Jesus did preach God as the Heavenly Father, as holy love, it must be admitted that the preparation of man for the coming of the Kingdom would involve man's trust in God as Father, and man's endeavour, as a child of God, to grow both in closeness of fellowship with, and completeness of likeness to, God. One

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cannot but feel bewildered and surprised by the view that the morality inspired by the faith in God's immediate presence in human history, and the hope of the imminent fulfilment of His purpose of truth and grace therein, must be of narrower range and of lower worth than a morality sustained by the confidence that in man's slow progress there is a power that makes for righteousness, and the expectation that somehow, as the long result of time, good will triumph over evil. A morality that ignores God's government in, and judgment on, the affairs of men would, one may suppose, make lower demands than one which confessed God's holy love as present reality and the unerring judgment of that holy love as imminent destiny.

But, further, if these phrases suggest that the teaching of Jesus was "panic" preaching, such as there has been in the history of the Christian Church, when there was a vivid expectation of an immediate Second Advent of Christ, then it must be insisted that in all Jesus' practical counsels there is no trace of such a mood.

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Some of the Thessalonian believers might neglect their daily callings and become busybodies (2 Thess. iii. 10-12) in their excitement; even Paul might advise against marriage "by reason of the present distress" (1 Cor. vii. 26); but in all the teaching of Jesus no instance can be quoted where Jesus gives a command the reason for which must be sought in any such overwrought anticipation of the end of the present order.

(11) Jesus' expectation of the coming of the Kingdom, however, may be regarded as itself so *visionary* as to cast suspicion on the sobriety of His moral ideal; but if we believe in God at all, must we not believe in His constant presence and potent action in human history? If we believe that He is unfathomable in wisdom, immeasurable in power, and inexhaustible in goodness, can we set the bounds of our knowledge or understanding of nature and history to the possibility of the fulfilment of His purpose of good towards mankind? If, on the other hand, we regard His relation to mankind as personal, as conditioned

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by man's moral obedience and religious aspiration, is it either unintelligible or incredible that the grace which can save and bless mankind to the uttermost is hindered and delayed in its working by man's unbelief, and can be set free to act only by his faith? Instead of sitting in judgment on Jesus' revelation of God's Fatherhood from our lower and narrower standpoint, it is more becoming in us to allow our conceptions of nature and history to be transformed by the light which His knowledge of God as Father casts on all God's works and ways in His world. If we hold fast the certainty of the supremacy of the divine truth and grace, the hope of Jesus for a speedy coming of the Kingdom of God, so soon as man's faith is ready to receive it, will seem both right and true, and we shall not depreciate any of His teaching as visionary.

(12) We can now advance to answer our last question: the wider issue which the title of this chapter raises. If Jesus' belief in, and hope of, the coming of the Kingdom of God does not lower the worth

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of His practical teaching, we may begin our discussion with the expectation that the belief in God and the hope of immortality need not pollute any morality. While the necessity of so adverse an influence of religion on morality can be denied, the possibility, even the actuality, must be admitted. Whenever the law of God is obeyed from the fear of punishment or the hope of reward as the dominant or exclusive motive, morality is polluted at its very source. It is not less so when that fear or that hope is projected into the future life. A service of God to escape hell and to secure heaven is hypocrisy, for the motive and the act are incongruous. So far as in Christendom a morality has been taught on such grounds, or been observed from such springs of action, there has been contamination of conduct by creed ; but this is neither Christian religion nor Christian morality. For what is the Christian motive ? Let Jesus Himself declare it : " Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect " (Matt. v. 48) ; and wherein this per-



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fection consists the preceding verses show :  
“ Love your enemies, and pray for them  
that persecute you ; that ye may be sons  
of your Father which is in heaven ; for  
He maketh His sun to rise upon the evil  
and the good, and sendeth rain on the  
just and unjust ” (verses 44-5). Paul’s  
motive is not lower : “ The love of Christ  
constraineth us ; because we thus judge,  
that One died for all, therefore all died ;  
and He died for all, that they which live  
should no longer live unto themselves,  
but unto Him who for their sakes died  
and rose again ” (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).  
Such a religious sanction of morality  
does not intrude any element foreign to  
morality itself ; for surely devotion to,  
fellowship with, and imitation of the eternal  
perfection of God, even as revealed in the  
human perfection of Jesus, is itself the  
consummation of morality. Duty for duty’s  
sake is an abstraction of the ethical schools ;  
holiness from love for Holy Love is the  
reality of the moral life. Again, is there  
any “ other-worldliness ” in John’s pre-  
sentation of the Christian hope ? “ Be-

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loved, now are we the children of God ; and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is " (1 John iii. 2). How is the influence of that hope immoral ? " And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure " (verse 3). It is true that the New Testament also uses the language of law ; it speaks of judgment, punishment, reward ; but surely the lower speech has to be interpreted through the higher of love, as in the Christian faith the filial relation to God takes the place of the legal. In the ideal this relation inspires there is nothing that is not moral to the very core.

(13) There is a reason why some moralists are desirous of detaching morality from both the belief in God and the hope of immortality, which must be looked at in closing. Many men admit the demands of morality who are indifferent to, if not doubtful of, the assurances of religion. They think that it is possible to escape from the difficulties of religious belief in

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the certainties of conscience. "Even if there is no God and no immortality, right is right and wrong is wrong, and there's an end of it, and we ask no more"—that is their attitude, for which one cannot but feel respect. By all means let a man keep his footing on conscience if he cannot reach the wider standing of faith. But it must be added that from the standpoint of a rationalism or agnosticism, for which God and immortality are delusions of the human mind, it must, on closer scrutiny of the problem, appear just as incredible that man has any liberty or responsibility as a person. It is only on the assumption, however, that man deceives himself in his faith in God, or hope of immortality, that the exclusion of the influence of the one or the other from morality can have even the semblance of reason. If there be a God, and if that God be conceived as moral perfection, human morality, in its search for an ideal and in its striving to realise that ideal, cannot ignore or be indifferent to the divine reality. If the moral progress in this life is not arrested

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at death, but is continued hereafter, its purposes can be vaster, and its expectations bolder. Morality should not cultivate the provincialism of this earthly life amid humanity alone; but reach out to the universalism of a divine horizon and of an eternal destiny. One should expect a finer quality and a larger aim in the morality which sets the human in its proper environment of the divine and enfolds time in eternity, than in a morality bounded by the social traditions and conventions of humanity in its history on earth. So far, then, is religion from spoiling morality that it gives to it a wider range and a fuller prospect, a deeper meaning and a higher worth. So far is Jesus' belief in the Kingdom of God and the hope of its coming from reducing His moral ideal to a *penitential discipline* or an *interim ethic*, that it asserts and expects the reproduction in man's earthly life of the eternal perfection of God. The answer we have reached here to our first question warrants us in still following Jesus.

## CHAPTER II

### DOES LOVE FORBID LAW ?

(1) WHILE the teaching of Jesus regarding love to God and man finds general acceptance, in theory if not in practice, there is an application of the principle which has caused offence and perplexity. When, in opposition to the *lex talionis* generally recognised in ancient society, He laid down the rule of non-retaliation, He carried the principle farther than even many moralists have been able to follow. While Laotze, the Chinese sage, taught that good should be returned for evil, his younger contemporary, Confucius, while accepting the Golden Rule, was not prepared to go quite so far. When he was asked : " What do you think about the principle of requiting enmity with kindness ? " he replied : " With what, then, would you requite kindness ? Reward enmity with just treatment, and

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kindness with kindness" (Soothill's "The Three Religions of China," p. 244). And yet on closer scrutiny such an application of the principle of love in morality must appear inevitable from the very nature of the Christian religion itself. In Jesus God is revealed as the Father who forgives sins ; and there can be fellowship with Him only as there is likeness to Him. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (verse 9). "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (vi. 14-15). The disciple but echoes the voice of the Master : "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children ; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Eph. iv. 32,

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v. 1). If the divine love finds its fullest expression in sacrifice for and forgiveness of man, human love, as it seeks fellowship with and likeness to the divine love, must not be content with anything less or lower than pardon at any price. In view of the flagrant disregard of the principle and its application in the history of Christendom, it must be insisted that here we have not a casual precept, an *obiter dictum*, which can be relegated to a secondary place in the Christian moral ideal; but that no man has a claim to be regarded as morally a Christian who does not constantly and consistently order all his relations to his fellow-men not only by the Golden Rule, which sets a limit to selfishness, but by this law, which may be compared to even more precious metal, of a selflessness possible only when the human self is possessed and transformed by the spirit of holy love. It will be necessary in the next chapter to deal with a radical objection to this principle and its application; and the further discussion of it can be reserved till then;

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meanwhile, we are concerned with the inference drawn by Tolstoy from Jesus' concrete illustrations.

(2) The difficulty which has been felt about the general application of the principle has been increased by the concrete illustrations of it given by Jesus Himself: "Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain" (Matt. v. 39-41). These are instances of private injury, public litigation, and governmental oppression. The last refers to "the *Angaria*, a sort of press-gang, a system of forced service which prevailed throughout the Roman Empire, empowering soldiers to employ men and beasts as baggage-bearers. Compare the impressment of Simon of Cyrene (xxvii. 32)." Bruce's comment on the passage is Smith's "Matthew," p. 61: "Christ's counsel is: do not submit to the inevitable in a slavish, sullen spirit, har-



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bouring thoughts of revolt. Do the service cheerfully, and more than you are asked. The counsel is far-reaching, covering the case of the Jewish people subject to the Roman yoke, and of slaves serving hard taskmasters. The three cases of non-resistance are not meant to foster an abject spirit. They point out the higher way to victory. He that magnanimously bears overcomes" ("The Expositor's Greek Testament," i. p. 113). To the instances of inevitable submission, mentioned by Bruce, we may add as even more relevant that of the Christian believer subject to persecution on account of his faith.

(3) The difficulty has been further aggravated by the inference that Tolstoy has drawn from this passage an *anarchism*, which condemns the maintenance of any legal rights, and consequently law itself, government of any kind by force, and most of all punishment of wrongdoers. "We do not need," says Haering, "to select examples from the past of that depreciation and rejection of legal duty, particularly the duty of preserving our own

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rights. In our midst at the present time Tolstoy combats the idea with an enthusiasm and a devotion comparable to those of the great protagonist of the past, St. Francis of Assisi. From childhood, he relates of himself, he had been instructed to respect these arrangements which by the use of force protected him from the bad man, taught him to defend himself against the wrongdoer, and to revenge injury by force. 'Everything belonging to me—my peace, the safety of my person, my property—all rested on the law, "a tooth for a tooth." But Christ says, "Resist not evil." I understand that He means just what He says. Obedience to this unrespected command of Christ would regenerate the world. If men would only cease altogether from insisting on their rights!' Thus the literal understanding of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 21-8) has the effect on Tolstoy of a new commandment" ("Ethics of the Christian Life," p. 218). This interpretation has found wide acceptance, and so demands close scrutiny.

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(4) In dealing with this contention we must carefully distinguish between bad and good government. It is not improbable that Tolstoy has been influenced in his interpretation by his own personal environment. If a government is oppressive in its methods to its subjects, and is not influenced by a single regard to the common good, but moved by a dominant consideration for the interests of the ruling caste, it will and must appear to those who suffer its exactions and restrictions an evil which the Christian ideal condemns. A reliance on force only, without any appeal to reason or conscience, is entirely opposed to the Christian spirit. A patriotism that in policy isolates one country from all others, and is ever devising and preparing for war against all others, is nothing else than anti-Christ. A jingoism which makes its boast of material resources for successful conflict with all other nations, and even a militarism which assumes that the relations of nations to one another can be determined only by means of the biggest battalions, are not

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more Christian. Even a treatment of criminals which is merely retributive and deterrent, and not mainly reformatory, does not accord with the Christian ideal; for in it even law must be subordinate to love, a means towards love's ends. In so far as Tolstoy has challenged so much that is utterly opposed to the teaching of Jesus in Christendom, he commands unreserved sympathy and even gratitude.

(5) In looking beyond these perversions and corruptions of government, we must, however, realise that Tolstoy's position is untenable. If we trace in history the gradual development of society, and the organ of its common life, the State, we are forced to the conclusion that law and order, maintained, if need be, by force, against those who do not give their moral assent to the authority of the community, are a necessary condition of the progress of society in manners and morals, culture and civilisation. A society in which every man's hand would be against every other, because each was left to do what seemed good in his own eyes, unless it were

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a community of perfect sages and saints, would soon come to naught; and any gains of its previous history would be lost. Vice must be discouraged and crime must be repressed, as well as virtue encouraged and culture promoted by the common will of the whole society. Much as the writer himself is devoted to the interests of international peace, and opposed to the false patriotism of jingoism and militarism, a Europe that is an armed camp, deplorable as it is, and unnecessary if only reason and conscience, not to say Christ, ruled the policy of nations, is not so intolerable as a Europe under the heel of a despot, as Napoleon essayed to be. Hard won liberty, national, political, civil, and religious, in the more advanced nations needs to be guarded against the aggression of the less developed nations. Government need not be the oppressor, but may be the protector.

(6) In view of recent developments in our own and other lands, Tolstoy's view appears an anachronism, for the State is becoming more and more moralised; its

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function to protect person and property against any kind of injury is becoming more and more subordinate; and it is directing its energies increasingly to the promotion of the common welfare in sanitation, education, moral restraint and influence. The standpoint of an abstract individualism, which would limit the control of the State as much as possible in the interests of an unrestricted liberty of the individual, is now out of date. We have not yet generally advanced, and it is not probable that we ever will advance, to a theoretical socialism which would put all industry under the absolute control of the community. But in our land at least it is coming slowly to be taken for granted that the functions of the State must be extended, whenever and wherever the common good seems to demand. As modern society is becoming more *organic*—that is, as greater division of labour, and so greater complexity of structure, involves greater mutual dependence—the State, as the organ of the common will, becomes ever more vital to its preservation and progress.

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One may even venture on the assertion that, as modern society becomes more Christian, as no man is left to bear his own burden, unaided if beyond his strength, and as all bear one another's burdens as each may be able, government will become not less, but ever more necessary.

(7) Allowing full weight to these considerations as against Tolstoy's position, it may appear to some that in urging them we are evading the issue that the words of Jesus raise, allowing even that Tolstoy's interpretation goes too far; and so we must come to even closer grips with the problem this utterance forces upon us. We must give due weight to the special method of Jesus as a teacher. First of all, He did not always speak with prosaic literalness. Often His language was highly figurative, as in Matt. xix. 12: "For there are eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." In reference to the last

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clause Eusebius tells us about Origen that "understanding this expression in too literal and puerile a sense, and at the same time thinking that he would fulfil the words of our Saviour, whilst he also wished to preclude the unbelievers from all occasion of foul slander, it being necessary for him, young as he was, to converse on divine truth not only with men but with females also, he was led on to fulfil the words of our Saviour by his deeds, expecting that it would not be known to the most of his friends. But it was impossible for him, much as he wished it, to conceal such an act" ("The Ecclesiastical History," Book VI., c. 8). He had much cause afterwards to regret his rash deed. It is not argued that the expression in the passage we are discussing is as distinctly figurative as in this saying ; but such an instance serves to warn us against the assumption that we loyally accept the teaching of Jesus only as we interpret it with prosaic literalness.

*Secondly*, we must recognise that even when Jesus was not speaking figuratively,



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but was giving a concrete instance of a general principle, He always gives the instance of the *maximum demand* of that principle. He seeks to show what is the greatest claim that may be made upon us. But the moral situation as a whole must in each case determine whether the maximum demand emerges or not. We must always return good for evil ; but we must exercise our moral judgment to discover whether we should be in every case really doing good by leaving evil unrebuked and unrestrained. At His arrest Jesus forbade the use of force in His defence by His disciples ; but He nevertheless rebuked the violence of His captors (Matt. xxvi. 52-6). When He was struck by an officer at His trial He challenged the act. " If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ? " (John xviii. 23). Even when questioned He held His peace ; and when the high priest adjured Him by the living God to tell whether He was the Christ or not, and He confessed that He was, He accompanied the confession by a solemn warn-

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ing that judgment would yet fall on His judge (Matt. xxvi. 62-4). The teaching of Jesus does not exclude, but demands the exercise of moral judgment.

*Thirdly*, the special circumstances of the disciples made these instances of the moral principle relevant to them in a measure in which they are not to us in our changed situation. They were not only subjects of a despotic government, where submission was the only course possible, and where the only alternative was between a sullen and a cheerful submission. But as believers they would increasingly find themselves in a hostile world, exposed alike to private and to public persecution, to the violence of the mob as well as to the penalties which the law might inflict upon them; and here the alternative before them was to endure with a calm courage and a glad sacrifice which would bear witness to the worth and power of the faith which was sustaining and inspiring them, or to suffer murmuringly and grudgingly so as, not only to obscure, but even discredit their

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testimony. They were not, and there was no likelihood of their ever being, citizens on whom rested any personal responsibility for the enforcement of law and the maintenance of order ; and so submission to wrong in order to lessen hostility and win acceptance for their faith was the plain duty, uncomplicated by any considerations as to the wider effect of their action, to which citizens who have some share in the government must give some weight. The history of the Christian Church, whose triumph was won by martyrdom, shows the wisdom of the counsels of Jesus ; and wherever the circumstances are the same, as those of missionaries in heathen lands, a like submission must be demanded.

(8) Our circumstances to-day are not the same ; we are not merely subjects, but citizens ; our government is not a despotism, but *a rule of the people by the people for the people*. We can give effect to the righteousness of the Kingdom in legislation and administration ; we can testify to our faith, not by submitting to

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private violence and public injustice, but by working for the supremacy of the ideal and the spirit of Jesus in all our social conditions. Our means assuredly must ever be kept consistent with our ends. The Christian appeal, even when we use government as the instrument of the Kingdom of God, must not be to brute force, but to moral influence. Even in the restraint of vice and the repression of crime as Christians we are bound to try and make the State as Christian in method as we can, as remedial and redemptive as is possible, and not vindictive and retributive merely. From the Christian standpoint, as he at least understands it, the writer cannot too deeply deplore the extension of the penalty of flogging, and the arguments by which some Christian ministers even have justified it. We must recognise that to-day we may be returning good for evil by limiting the transgressor's opportunity for violence or fraud, by bringing to bear upon him reformatory influences far more effectively than if we passively submitted, not only to every

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injury ourselves, but even abjectly assented to the infliction of misery and pain on others whom it was in our power to protect.

(9) Returning, however, from the interpretation of the passage to which Tolstoy makes his appeal, to the general question, we may now seek to determine as accurately as we can what the attitude of Jesus was to government, to the law and the order of human society. When we compare His teaching with that of any modern moralist, what must at once strike us is the absence of any political programme, and the abstinence from any political action. For this there was a very urgent reason. While Jesus knew Himself to be fulfilling the law and the prophets, His fulfilment ran counter to the prevalent popular expectation, which could appeal even to the prophetic predictions in their letter, if not always in their spirit. What was desired by the nation was a political Messiahship; the people were looking for a son of David, who, ascending the ancestral throne in Jerusalem, would cast off the yoke of Rome,

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and would reign, in power and prosperity as well as in righteousness, over an emancipated and restored nation. Even the disciples shared these views; and hence the sharp encounter between Jesus and Peter after the confession in Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). It was accordingly absolutely imperative that Jesus should give no encouragement whatever to these vain wishes and idle hopes; and so His vocation forced upon Him this limitation of interest and effort; and accordingly His example cannot be appealed to as determining what in all time the attitude of believers must be towards government.

(10) Jesus simply acquiesced in the existing order in church and State, and declined to interfere with it in any way. When asked to settle a family quarrel about property He rebuked the appeal. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And probably discerning the motive, added: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke xii. 13-15). Even when He had exercised His miracu-

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lous power to cleanse a leper He would not claim the priest's prerogative to certify that the cure was effected. "Go thy way, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (v. 14). At the risk of incurring greater unpopularity, and of offending even some who were favourably inclined to His cause, He would give no sanction to the Jewish patriotism which refused to pay the imperial taxes, and gave an object-lesson by means of the coin from Cæsar's mint of the duty that when benefits are accepted obligations must be recognised (Matt. xxii. 15-22). Even though the temple tribute belonged to the old legal order, which He had come to supersede by the new filial relation to God, He bade Peter pay it, and so avoid giving needless offence (xvii. 27). As a teacher of godliness and goodness He inevitably came into conflict with the interpretation of the law by the scribes, and the piety and morality that the Pharisees based on this interpretation. Admitting that even in the law there were com-

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mandments, given for "the hardness of men's hearts" (xix. 8), His declarations regarding divorce were directed against the laxity of the scribal interpretation; and in regard to the fifth commandment He deliberately charged the scribes with "making void the word of God by their traditions" (Mark vii. 8-13). Nevertheless, He gave His disciples the injunction: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not" (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3).

Must we say that this submission to the existing authorities was entirely due to the exigencies of the situation, belongs wholly to the expediency of the moment? The urgency with which Paul teaches the recognition of the "divine right" even of the Roman government may seem to be explicable in the same way; and yet, when we consider the Christian attitude as a whole as presented in the New Testament, the conclusion seems inevitable that on the one hand patience, forbearance,



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meekness, and forgiveness are characteristic of its spirit rather than resistance to or revolt against oppression and injustice, and that, on the other hand, its reliance for the progress of the Kingdom of God is not on the arm of flesh, but on the spirit of the living God, on moral persuasion and religious influence rather than on social pressure or political action. Without condemning government, it is not by means of a new external order that Jesus seeks to realise His ideal.

(11) This conclusion does not involve, however, that the Christian in the modern state should be indifferent or inactive as a citizen. The principles which Jesus taught do, if applied, involve the transformation of human society into an order more just, more generous, more kind, and more helpful ; and the Christian citizen may, by the legitimate exercise of his influence, by his vote and his voice, hasten that transformation. Only he is forbidden by violent resistance or forcible revolt to seek the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Whether there are circumstances

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in which injustice is so flagrant, and oppression so intolerable, that the ending of the existing order in the hope of amendment in a new order is justified, we in modern Britain need not discuss as a practical question at all. The spirit of lawlessness, which refuses compliance with any law that it does not like, or seeks to hasten a desired change of the law by deeds of violence, is undoubtedly not Christian; and should in the name and with the authority of Jesus be unreservedly condemned. The attempt even by legislation and administration far in advance of the common conscience of the community, which must exercise a moral compulsion instead of securing a moral assent, is a contradiction of the Christian method. And the Christian Church in the modern state to-day seems to be in some danger of trying "to force the pace" of the coming of the Kingdom, by looking to the outward agency of the State, instead of its own ministry of divine truth and grace, to change the hearts and lives of men.

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(12) That Jesus accepted the existing order, and did not attempt to substitute another for it, or even give His disciples a sketch of what it should be, but only left in His teaching moral and religious principles revolutionary in essential character, but evolutionary in their method of application, has been the immeasurable gain of Christianity in comparison with other religions, such as Islam and Buddhism ; it has been saved from bondage to local and temporary conditions, and been left free for progressive and expansive adaptation. This advantage is not, however, accidental, but consequential on the character of the teaching of Jesus, as distinctively moral and religious, possessing the qualities of permanence and universality. It was not His earthly prudence, but His heavenly wisdom, that kept His teaching and example above the forms and fashions of the place and the time. Not only so, but any definite legislation would have contradicted what is unique even in His teaching as moral and religious, that the filial is substituted for the legal relation

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to God : the surrender of the child takes the place of the obedience of the servant. The discipline of the law has been and is still necessary where there is moral and religious immaturity ; and this Paul, in his violent reaction from Pharisaism, dominated by his own experience rather than guided by the lessons of history, failed adequately to recognise ; but Tolstoy's contention, mistaken as regards the cause, is true of the goal of the realisation of the Christian ideal, that law must be taken up into, and find its fulfilment in, love.

## CHAPTER III

### IS FORGIVENESS SLAVISH ?

(1) WHAT Tolstoy praises as the essential Christianity, to be universally accepted and obeyed, that Nietzsche blames as *the slave morality*, which he desires to replace by *the master morality*. He most emphatically denies that the Christian morality tends "to preserve and multiply a *desirable* type of man." The contrast of the two types is presented as follows by one of his exponents and advocates, Anthony M. Ludovici. "In the first, the master morality, it is the oak which contends : I must reach the sun and spread broad branches in so doing ; this I call 'good,' and the herd that I shelter may also call it good. In the second, the slave morality, it is the shrub which says : I also want to reach the sun ; these broad branches of the oak, however, keep the sun from me,

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therefore the oak's instincts are 'bad' " ("Nietzsche, His Life and Works," p. 42). The first kind of morality has been evolved by the ruling caste, the second by the ruled. For the first class, "all is *good* which proceeds from strength, power, health, well-constitutedness, happiness, and awfulness" ; and " 'bad' must be applied to the coward, to all acts that spring from weakness, to the man with 'an eye to the main chance,' who would forsake everything in order to live " (pp. 44-5). For the second class, "inasmuch as oppression, suffering, meanness, and servitude are the general rule, all will be regarded as good that tends to alleviate pain. Pity, the obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, and humility—these are undoubtedly the virtues we shall here find elevated to the highest places, because they are *useful* virtues ; they make life endurable ; they are helpful in the struggle for existence " (p. 45). The first type of morality represents the ascending line, and the second the descending line of life ; and yet Nietzsche admits that it is the "slave"

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and not the "master" values which dominate modern morality in theory if not in practice; and he sets himself the task of "transvaluing our values," of substituting the *master* for the *slave* morality. For "in Christian values he read nihilism, decadence, degeneration, and death. They were calculated to favour the multiplication of the least desirable on earth; and as such, despite his antecedents, and with his one desire, 'the elevation of the type of man,' always before him, he condemned Christian morality from top to bottom. This magnificent attempt on the part of the low, the base, and the worthless, to establish themselves as the most powerful on earth, must be checked at all costs; and with terrible earnestness he exhorts us to alter our values. 'O my brethren, with whom lieth the greatest danger to the whole human future? Is it not with the good and the just? *Break up, break up, I pray you, the good and the just*'" (pp. 56-7).

(2) It is not intended to pursue the discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy any

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further ; but before we pass to consider the similar challenge of Christian morality in a less extreme—and therefore all the more dangerous—form, which is widely diffused where there is no knowledge of this philosophy, a few considerations may be advanced to show how thoroughly Nietzsche misreads history.

*First of all*, it may be noted that the impression Christianity has made on some modern interpreters is that it was in its beginning “a slave revolt.” However unhistorical that view is, it at least shows that the impression made on Nietzsche is not the only possible one.

*Secondly*, the exhortations of Paul to slaves to be content to abide in their present condition (1 Cor. vii. 20, 21), and to render their service as unto the Lord (Eph. vi. 5-8), indicate that the new consciousness of spiritual dignity as a son of God tended not towards acquiescence in, but rather discontent with, servile conditions.

*Thirdly*, the growing influence of the Christian faith against the institution of



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slavery itself is surely evidence that it is not a "slave" morality.

*Fourthly*, the history of Christian martyrdom is full of splendid records of courage and heroism, of spiritual strength triumphant over physical weakness, disproving the charge that Christianity is the morality of the cowardly and weak.

*Lastly*, the *master* morality of the Greek states and of the Roman Empire (as of the other great empires before it) has not preserved them; but, according to Nietzsche's own admission, it is the "slave" morality that has survived.

(3) If Nietzsche's view stood alone it might be dismissed as the eccentricity of a wayward genius without resort to the suggestion that his whole philosophy is premonitory of the madness which afterwards came upon him. But it does not stand alone. It is a symptom rather than a source of a common tendency, full of peril for the modern world. It is Darwinism applied to ethics and politics. The theory of "the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence," when trans-

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ferred from the physical to the moral sphere, can very easily be translated into the assumption that "might is right," that success is the proof of value, that God is always on the side of "the biggest battalions"; it can become, not only a justification, but even a glorification of the fraud or force that gets on in the world. This tendency is seen in the worship so assiduously offered to the "rising sun," the man who by some special endowment can push his way above his fellows, and can use them as the "stepping stones" for his rise to the "higher things" of his earthly ambition. It is seen in the jingoism which, under the guise of patriotism, relies on having men and money, ships and guns; and is ever wanting to pick a quarrel, and is spoiling for a fight with some other people. It is seen in the arrogance of the races which claim to be *superior* to the races which they assume to be so inferior as to have no other right than to be exploited for their own gain or glory. This actual movement, and not Nietzsche's philosophy, is

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the dangerous challenge to the Christian ideal.

(4) It is only as a specious pretence that this theory can appeal to Darwinism for its warrant, as Darwin himself repudiates any such extension of his theory. "With highly civilised nations," he says, "continued progress depends to a subordinate degree on natural selection," and he even recognises that it is characteristic of the most civilised society to arrest as far as possible the action of natural selection. "We civilised men do our utmost to check the process of elimination (of the weak in body and mind) ; we build asylums for the imbeciles, the maimed, and the sick ; we institute poor laws ; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of everyone to the last moment." Wallace, who shares the honour with Darwin of discovering this explanation of organic evolution, very expressly sets limits to its applicability ; for he maintains that "in man's intellectual and moral nature certain definite portions could not have been developed by variation

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and natural selection alone." Huxley is still more distinct and emphatic in his "Romanes" lecture: "Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best." Accordingly, he condemns as mistaken the view "that because, on the whole, animals and plants have advanced in perfection of organisation by means of the struggle for existence, and the consequent survival of the fittest, therefore men in society, men as ethical beings, must look to the same process to help them towards perfection." Benjamin Kidd, in his two books on "Social Evolution" and "The Principles of Western Civilisation," seeks to prove that progress in human society demands the predominance of altruism over egoism, of regard for others over selfishness; and that in the struggle for existence, of which societies and not in-

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dividuals are the units, that society will survive in which altruism does prevail over egoism. The recent Balkan war may be taken as a striking illustration of this principle. We are not here concerned with the validity or the adequacy of the Darwinian theory as such, although other factors in organic development might be insisted on, but our sole purpose is to show that the tendencies which oppose themselves to the Christian morality cannot legitimately claim the support of this widely accepted scientific theory ; so that in maintaining the teaching of Jesus against this modern challenge we are not opposing ourselves to facts ascertained by science, or to an explanation which has found much support among men of science. Just as little as Nietzsche's philosophy can claim to be the only possible, or even the most probable, interpretation of the actual course of modern or ancient history, can this modern tendency, even when it makes the attempt, justify itself as the necessary result in morals of our progress in physical science.

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(5) We cannot be content, however, with the attack on the opposing forces ; we must attempt the defence of the Christian position. We are not concerned here with the defence of Jesus' sayings about forgiveness merely, but of the distinctively Christian type of morality of which the particular precept is a characteristic expression. Humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, sacrifice—these are the distinctively Christian virtues to which is opposed this modern tendency to self-assertion. Can any or all of these virtues be properly described as slavish ? In answering that question we must advance inward, from the circumference to the centre.

*First of all*, we may notice the contrast which Christian ethics offers to pagan, while recognising also the connection. The Christian attitude of appreciation and acceptance of all that was good in current morality, even in a pagan society, is fitly expressed by Paul in his counsel : “ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, what-

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soever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report : if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8 ; Rev. Ver. marg. : " Gr., take account of"). When Christian morality assumed a more systematic form, the four Greek virtues of Plato's " Republic " were conjoined with the three Christian graces of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiii. 13). Nevertheless, the Christian morality is in advance of the pagan in its emphasis on the virtues which, in contrast to the *active*, have sometimes been called the *passive*, but mistakenly, for, as we shall afterwards see, the distinctively Christian virtues make as large a demand for the exercise of the whole personality as any of the pagan. In the four Greek virtues there is not absent the natural impulse of man to self-assertion—an impulse which man derives from his animal ancestry (if we adopt the modern view of man's descent), or at least shares with his kindred as living creatures (if we hold the older

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view), which, in the course of his moral development, has been but slowly brought under the control of a regard for others, and which we can observe in the child's wilfulness, that it is the aim of education to restrain. The wise man of the ancient world was marked by a considerable measure of self-sufficiency in his moral judgments. While the virtue of temperance may seem the denial of self-satisfaction, yet this restraint of the animal appetites was urged out of self-regard, the securing of the greatest possible pleasure and the avoiding of the inevitable pain that self-indulgence brings. That courage, as it was conceived even by Plato, is self-assertion in peril or against pain is evident. While the virtue of justice, which Plato's "Republic" is written to exhibit on a large scale, does carry us beyond the merely natural impulse, yet it falls far short of the subordination of egoism to altruism which Christianity demands. In so far as self-assertion does enter as a beneficent element into human life, it was not necessary for Jesus in His teaching to lay any



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emphasis upon it, as it had behind it the constant pressure of the natural impulse and the support of the current morality. A moral teacher has value not as he merely reaffirms the accepted standard, but as he advances beyond it and lays stress on neglected and, it may be, even despised virtues ; and this Jesus assuredly did.

(6) His emphasis on the *passive* virtues (as for brevity of reference we may call them, remembering always the qualification already indicated) is not to be explained entirely by the circumstances of the disciples to whom He at first addressed His counsels ; but results necessarily, as we have already seen, from the very nature of His revelation of God and His religion for man. But those circumstances did give His counsels a seasonable fitness. He anticipated for His disciples, as for Himself, the hostility of the world around, and even persecution. He was concerned as to the behaviour of His disciples when so exposed to pain and peril, and that for two reasons, which, however closely related in fact, we may distinguish for our thought. He

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desired them in every situation to walk worthy of their high calling as His followers and as, through that relation to Himself, the children of the Heavenly Father; and He desired that by such a walk they should advance His cause, hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God. Did He, or did He not, in His counsels show not only earthly prudence, but even heavenly wisdom? Resistance would have deepened the hostility and increased the persecution. Submission was inevitable; but that submission might be deprived of all moral significance or be endowed with the highest moral value. A willing, loving, and forgiving endurance was the victory of good over evil; while a murmuring and vengeful yielding to force would have been the triumph of evil over good. The persecutor had it in his power to debase his victim morally, as well as to inflict pain and loss on him, unless the Christian believer triumphed over him by turning his hate into love and his cruelty into forgiveness. As the issue of the struggle of the Church with the Roman Empire proved,

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the martyr's path was the way, not of defeat, but of victory. It was the spirit of the martyrs which at last overcame hostility and changed persecution to tolerance. But it was no selfish calculation of such a change that inspired the sufferers for the Christian faith. They were striving to win the persecutors for Christ, and not to gain their own relief from pain or death. So successful was this means of spreading the faith that the persecutors were often changed into fellow-martyrs; the constancy of the Christian maiden in face of death leads her executioner to the confession of Christ. We may ask, even indignantly, where is the slave morality in Christian martyrdoms?

(7) If we look a little more closely at the moral qualities displayed in Christian martyrdom, and even in the sufferings under persecution that fell short of the sealing of the confession with blood, we shall be constrained to recognise that this Christian endurance, so far from being the refuge of weakness, was the victory of moral strength and religious life. To get

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angry, to murmur and complain, to return reviling for abuse, to strike back, is the natural impulse—it is no moral virtue at all. To exercise self-control under the severest provocation to anger, to suppress even the vengeful feeling when hatred is doing the most shameful and cruel work, to desire the highest good for those who are inflicting the worst evil they know, to show such confidence in God, such courage in peril, such conquest over pain as to impress even the callous spectator, and to make him seek to know the secret of the martyr, that is surely the sublimest moral victory which is possible for man. There is a physical courage that is due to natural constitution and temperament, which has no distinctive moral value, even although we cannot but admire it as a personal endowment ; but we know from the records of martyrdom that in their triumph it was often the willing spirit which subdued to its own heroic quality the weak flesh. Accordingly, the moral resolve to submit may be far more courageous than the natural impulse to resist.

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Jesus in His counsels was assuredly not sending His disciples on the easiest, but on the hardest path for the soul.

(8) The victory of Christian martyrdom over persecution leads us on to a still wider issue. Is social progress advanced by the principle of self-assertion or by the principle of self-sacrifice, by egoism or by altruism? It is evident that the *master* morality of Nietzsche and his practical imitators must be a "caste" morality; the *superman*, to exalt himself, must degrade others; he can realise himself only by exploiting others; he can treat himself as his supreme end only by denying to others the right to be ends in themselves, and not merely the means to himself as end. The races that call themselves the "superior" can, on these principles, maintain their superiority, as many exponents of this tendency unblushingly do, by desiring and striving to keep the "inferior" races in their inferiority. The white man who wants to use the black man as his beast of burden is very angry at Christian missions; they spoil the "nigger" for his purposes. Only

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a sacrificial and altruistic morality, as the Christian is, can become universal, for the self-realisation of the one does not involve the debasement of the many, but aims at and strives for their equal moral exaltation. The martyr endured that he might win his persecutor for Christ, and so make him partaker of the same blessed salvation. Can there be any hesitation about the rival claims of a morality that can be only the gain of the few at the cost of the many and a morality that alone makes possible the common good of all?

(9) The final argument for the Christian morality as the love which forgives that it may save is, that only such a morality can be the outcome of the religion in which the faith of man claims, uses, and enjoys the grace of God. Not only is love to God in Christ the motive of the Christian morality, but likeness to the love of God must be, and cannot but be, its aspiration. The earthly streams must be of the same kind as the heavenly springs. It is the certainty the Christian has in his forgiving love that he is imitating the

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divine perfection which can alone sustain him in the challenge which his immediate experience may often offer to his motive and aspiration. It does often appear as if the world's ways of ambition, contention, and dominance were mightier than God's way of forbearance and forgiveness. Not only of old did the Cross appear to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to-day still the sacrificial love must seem the defeat of weakness by strength, and the exposure of foolishness by prudence. But, nevertheless, if we look beyond the moment to the progress of humanity, we may confess with Paul that "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men " (1 Cor. i. 22-5). The Lion of the tribe of Judah who hath prevailed to open the book of God's purpose in this world, and to loose the seals thereof, is the Lamb in the midst of the throne (Rev. v. 5, 6). Unless the Christian revelation is false and the Christian religion vain, the holy way

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of the Cross is the blessed way of the Triumph. It is better to appear foolish and weak with God than to seem wise in the eyes of the Greek or mighty for the soul of the Jew. It is only a certain faith in the real supremacy of God as love, in spite of all the contrary appearances in nature and history, which can justify the constant love that is ever forgiving that it may save, and which can sustain the confident hope that the Cross alone is the sign of victory. The teaching of Jesus is thus rooted in His person and His work, in the very nature of the God whom He came to reveal as Father, and in the distinctive character of that sonship towards God, unto which He gave Himself to redeem man. A challenge of this type of morality is a challenge of Christianity itself; and its abandonment is an apostasy from Jesus Christ. No temporary or local circumstances need be appealed to as its excuse; its vindication must be as absolute as the Christian religion itself claims to be. If God be love, if Christ be grace, if the Cross most clearly reveals



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God in Christ and most fully redeems man unto God through Christ, if mankind is called in the common life, the *Koinonia* (fellowship), of the Spirit to brotherhood, to membership in the one body of Christ, then forgiveness is not slavish, but man's closest imitation to God.

(10) The vindication of the teaching of Jesus against this modern challenge, both in theory and in practice, is the condemnation of modern Christendom. When we face the actual conditions within the Christian lands and the real relations between Christian peoples, we may ask truly if the name is not a sarcasm and a mockery, a bitter jest. In our social customs, in our national policy, in our international relations, do we live and speak and act as those who believe with Christ that love is the supreme ideal for man because it is the absolute reality of God, and that love's way of forgiveness is not the foolishness and weakness of man, but the wisdom and power of God ? Do Christian men and peoples not, on the contrary, act as though force were stronger than God ; and it were

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possible to confess God as supreme with the lips, and trust rather in what force can effect in the heart? We must frankly face the fact that either Jesus was mistaken, or Christendom to-day is for the most part wrong. If we cannot, with Tolstoy, call on Christendom at once to abandon order, law, and government, with an appeal in the last resort to force—for we must recognise the slow progress of mankind in Christian culture and civilisation—yet we ought to insist that, even at some risk and with some cost, a Christian nation should seek and strive to rely less and less on any outward compulsions, and to put more and more its confidence in inward constraints.

(II) This forgiving and saving love is, it must be added, in correction of the error which represents God's Fatherhood as good nature, and forgiveness as sentimentality, a *holy love*, as in the Cross condemning the sins which it forgives, and by its forgiveness seeking to bring the forgiven to repentance and amendment. Accordingly, while it has only one motive and purpose, it will not and cannot always

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express itself in the same act ; it may be as real in severity as in tenderness, in rebuke as in entreaty, in restraint as in encouragement. If, as against Nietzsche, we must insist on the Christian morality as sacrificial love, brave, strong, and victorious, in correction of Tolstoy we must maintain that law may be the servant of love, and that in the slow progress of mankind love's goal cannot be reached at one step, but by many painful steps along a path often hard and dark. Without rashness in casting aside the law and order which are the products of a long evolution which has not lacked the divine guidance, and yet with boldness in advancing to every fuller moralisation of the law and to every more thorough humanising of the order which wisdom allows, Christian love must press on, until, with Christ, it sees of the travail of its soul, and is satisfied in a humanity in which good has at last prevailed over evil, and sacrifice has gained the sovereignty over all selfishness. How far off that consummation seems in man's expectation, yet how near it lies in God's intention !

## CHAPTER IV

### CAN THE LOVE OF SELF BE SELFISH ?

(1) MAN is made for society, and his relation to his fellow-men must always be an object of deep interest and great concern to him ; but there are periods when, owing to rapid and important changes in the conditions of life, the problem of society assumes quite an exceptional prominence and urgency. This can without qualification be said of the present age. Never were the theoretical questions about the nature and development of society so widely discussed ; and never were so great efforts made to deal with its practical difficulties. As the actual conditions of modern society are increasing the mutual dependence of all the parts, of all individuals, classes, or callings, so the intellectual tendency is to emphasise more and more the “ organic ” nature and the “ vital ” development of human society.

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The urgent question that the age is addressing to the Christian Church is this: does its teaching contradict or confirm this conception of society as analogous to a "living body," of which the members suffer or prosper together? And the Christian Church, confronted by this demand, is scrutinising the teaching of Jesus to discover whether, different as were the actual conditions of the society in which He lived from our own, He nevertheless had the insight and the foresight to express general principles which are appropriate and applicable to the world in which we live to-day.

(2) The two extremes of thought on the subject of the relation of the individual to society are *individualism* and *socialism*, although it would be difficult to find either intellectual tendency expressed without some qualification and reservation in favour of the other; and the attempt is sometimes made to claim Jesus for the one side or the other. Within the Christian Church socialism has been opposed on the ground of the individualism of the Christian

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religion ; and to-day socialism is sometimes advocated as the necessary issue of the principles taught by Jesus. But, if serious thinkers do recognise that each of these tendencies is an exaggeration unless modified by the other, we may well hesitate about identifying the teaching of Jesus with the one or the other. If the teaching of Jesus is to have any meaning or worth for us to-day, its permanent and universal principles must be detachable from the local and temporary forms of thought and life of His own age and people ; and still less can it be identified with the intellectual or social fashions of our or any other age. We may conclude that He is too great to have these partisan and sectarian labels attached to His teaching. Avoiding as far as we can the almost inevitable bias to find in the teaching of Jesus a confirmation of the opinions we approve, and a contradiction of the views we condemn, we must endeavour to examine that teaching, prepared to admit that it may not at all fit into any of the moulds of our modern thinking.

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(3) We have already had occasion to lay stress on the absence from the teaching of Jesus of any social or political programme, and His personal abstinence from any action which could appear as an interference with the existing order of society. There is not only the reason already noted, that it was necessary for Him in this way to avoid giving any encouragement whatever to the false and vain expectations of the Messiah common in Judaism, but it followed necessarily from His vocation as the Revealer of God and the Redeemer of men that His work should not be obscured and limited by the social or political conditions of His own time or people. As bringing the eternal God to men, and as calling men into the eternal life in God, He must needs see all Himself, and show all to others, *sub specie æternitatis*. A gospel for mankind could not be a scheme of reform for one nation. Accordingly, we should look in vain in the teaching of Jesus for specific directions regarding political institutions or social relations: had Jesus

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included these in His precepts He would have allowed Himself to be limited in His mission and His message, as did Gautama the Buddha or Mohammed the prophet of Allah by racial peculiarity ; and so His religion would have lacked the universality which is the justification of its missionary effort, and the explanation of its success in bringing in all peoples into His Church. This negative aspect of His teaching—what we must not expect in it—needs to be at the outset emphasised.

(4) If we start from the correlative truths of Jesus' revelation, the universal Fatherhood of God and the consequent infinite worth of the individual soul, we have set the bounds within which His teaching moves. There is, on the one hand, an *individualism* which must not be ignored. As the parables in Luke xv. teach, every soul is of so great value to God that He feels its sin as a loss and has joy in its recovery. Christianity is committed to the declaration and vindication of the sacred right of personality. No man, however



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“lost” his condition as regards social reputation, moral character, or religious disposition, is worthless to God, and can be treated as worthless by man. No child of God can be merely a “hand” for employment by and for the enrichment of another; each man is an end in himself, having a liberty to exercise, an obligation to discharge, a personality to develop, and a destiny to realise which are all his own; and no man may be treated only as a means to the advance, ambition, or amusement of another. Kant’s insistence on the recognition of and the respect for humanity in every other man is in entire agreement with the teaching of Jesus; and that teaching gives surer ground in the divine relationship for the human claim. In so far as any social scheme involves a repression of personality, a subordination of the individual to society so that he is exploited by it rather than realised in it, it is non-Christian, as it is contrary to the teaching of Jesus.

(5) It is entirely in accord with this estimate of the infinite worth of the

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individual soul that the obligation of love for self is taught. This love of self is not selfishness, however, for there are two qualifications of it that entirely exclude selfishness. The self to be loved is not the lower self that as self-pleasing and self-sparing must be denied; but the self which is to be realised in absolute love of God, in entire consecration to the Kingdom of God (Matt. xxii. 37-40). The end for self which this Christian love of self seeks, and is alone warranted in seeking, is the supremacy of the Kingdom of God and the surrender of all other personal interests to the fatherly care of God (Matt. vi. 33). This self is to be loved only equally (in a qualitative, not quantitative, sense) with others: for while subjectively to myself my own soul alone may appear of supreme value, yet objectively in the judgment of God as interpreted by Jesus, *each* individual soul has infinite worth. Self-reverence the Christian estimate of personality demands and justifies, but not self-conceit, self-confidence, or self-concern. The end which the soul is called to seek

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in the Kingdom of God is a common end; and the Fatherly care to which all other personal interests are surrendered is a common care. It is not a separate, a competing, or a conflicting purpose to which men in the love of self are called; but a purpose, which, as embracing all, and as conditional in its realisation in all by its realisation in each, can only be fulfilled as the love of others equals the love of self.

(6) This principle is given less abstract and more concrete form in the saying which is generally known as the Golden Rule (Matt. vii. 12). Regarding this Golden Rule it must be observed that it is rather a check on selfishness than a measure of the unselfishness which is characteristic of Christian life; it requires of the selfish man that he should measure his obligations to others by his expectations from others; the more his selfishness prompts him to demand from others, the more does this Golden Rule require him to render to others: the Golden Rule sets over every self-assertion desired a self-sacrifice imposed.

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Thus Christian individualism does not allow the exploiting of others, because it imposes a service of others commensurate with the demand on others. This check on selfishness must not be taken, however, as the measure of unselfishness ; it is not the *maximum* but the *minimum* demand of Christian love. For the unselfish man will be ready to do to others far more and far better than he expects others to do to himself. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). The ministry He rendered was not measured by the ministry He expected from others. The Christian individualism is, because of its conception of the self, very far removed from the contemporary tendency so described, which magnifies the claims and minimises the duties of the individual in relation to the society.

(7) While the teaching of Jesus gives no support to the one extreme of individualism, it can no more be claimed for the other extreme of socialism, if we

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use the term with any precision. There are many ambiguous uses; but we may insist that the meaning with which history invests the term is this: contemporary socialism is not *communism* in demanding that there should be no private property at all, even for use or enjoyment, but it is *collectivism*, in advocating the ownership and control of all capital as means of production by the community, be it the trades union (as in syndicalism), or the State, represented either by the municipality or the national government (as in socialism generally). In so far as socialism seeks to assert and give effect to the supremacy of the common good over private interests it has some resemblance to the teaching of Jesus. The mutual service which Christian love demands does not fall short of what socialism seeks by such an economic arrangement to attain. Socialism does not make a greater social demand than does Jesus in the equal love for self and others which He enjoins.

But, as soon as we go beyond this general resemblance of intention, the differ-

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ences become still more striking. In the *first place*, socialism is primarily concerned about an economic reconstruction of human society, although it may appeal in its favour to moral reasons and expect moral results from it. But the teaching of Jesus is not at all concerned with any economic system ; nor does He seek to change men by altering their outward conditions. The method of Jesus is through and through moral and religious. Jesus neither condemned nor approved any economic system ; and His authority cannot be appealed to either for or against socialism. If it were shown that only in collectivism can men render one another the full measure of mutual service, and that only by such economic conditions can the moral and religious change of men be affected, then assuredly the Christian would be not only justified in adopting socialism, but even constrained to do so. It need not be added, however, that this demonstration is not complete.

There are even two considerations which must be set on the other side. The human

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personality realises itself in its use and enjoyment of its property, and a system that laid as rigid restrictions as socialism would do on the control of property would limit the range for the free exercise, and so the full development of the personality. The stewardship of wealth may be a means of grace, a test of worth. Further, in all Jesus' teaching regarding mutual service, it is assumed to be voluntary ; and, if it ceased to be voluntary it would lose its meaning and worth. A consistent socialism, with the complete control of the individual by society, would involve a legalism, having no affinity to the willing service of one another of the children of God, who have found their freedom in Christ.

(8) If this conclusion seems disappointing to those who are eager to find in Jesus' teaching guidance and encouragement for the improvement of our social conditions, they may be reassured that if the implication of Jesus' teaching were completely, consistently, and courageously applied to all social relations, we should move swiftly

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and surely to that better social order which socialism aims at, although we might reach it by other means. Much of Jesus' teaching on human duty is found in His parables ; and we may glance at three of them which are concerned with the use of property as suggesting the concrete applications of His supreme law of absolute love of God and equal love of self and neighbour. In a procession of the unemployed some years ago in London there was displayed a banner, with this strange device : "*Curse your charity ; give us justice.*" In so far as it was a protest against unjust social arrangements and economic conditions, the misery of which is only in a very small measure relieved by private beneficence, it might command one's sympathy, however much one might regret the manner of expression. Jesus does not contemplate the possibility of a social order, an economic system, in which there would be no need of and no room for philanthropy. This does not involve for us a prohibition of any attempt theoretically to devise and practically to realise



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all such changes as may substitute justice for charity.

But so long as social arrangements and economic conditions are so defective as to involve need and misery for any of our fellow-men, the teaching of Jesus enforces the claim of philanthropy, and invests it with the highest conceivable sanction.

In the Parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv. 31-46), Jesus pronounces blessed those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and cared for the sick and the prisoners; and accursed those who have failed to render such service. It has sometimes been argued that as the subjects of the judgment are described as the nations, the parable does not state the standard of judgment for Christians. But surely we may apply here the principle of Jesus. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God" (Matt. v. 20). Even if the parable taught that philanthropy would be the test of those who were ignorant of the Gospels, surely not less,

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but more, would be expected of all who possessed that fuller light. But, further, the reason given for the approval or the condemnation, that in ministering to the needy there is ministry unto the Lord, presupposes the knowledge of the Gospel. Those who walk in this clearer light should not only desire to minister to the Lord, but should be able to discern the Lord in even the least of His brethren. Kant bids us respect humanity in every man ; Jesus enforces the duty of philanthropy as a recognition of the oneness of the Lord with all, even the least of His brethren.

(9) The doom that awaits the neglect of the duty of philanthropy is set forth pictorially in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31). Here Jesus uses the current beliefs about the future life, as He does the phenomena of nature and the experiences and behaviour of men in other parables, as the material for His story, without setting the seal of His approval upon them. We must not treat the parable as an apocalypse of the future life, forming part of the Christian

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revelation. The recognition that the language is figurative and not dogmatic does not weaken the force of the lesson which is conveyed. It may be admitted that neither the context nor the contents of the parable make that lesson as distinct and certain as in many other parables; for the first and the second parts seem to convey a separate truth. The second part (Luke xvi. 27-31) appears to teach the sufficiency of the law of Moses for moral guidance, and the impossibility of impressing, even by a miracle, those who disregarded the claims of the law. Verse 14 would supply a suitable context for the first part of the parable (verses 19-26); but the connection is interrupted by verses 15-18, which appear to be quite irrelevant to the situation, and are probably inserted by the evangelist here by some association of ideas which is now not apparent to us. Nevertheless, we may gather that Jesus was warning the rich against a wrong use of their wealth, and we must go to the contents of the parable to give greater definiteness to that warning. Jesus pre-

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supposes what He elsewhere urges, that the possession of riches is a peril to the soul ; and that the experience of poverty may not only not hinder but may promote godliness. The rich may put their trust in their riches ; the poor are likely to put their trust in God. The name Lazarus, "God the helper," is significant of the beggar's confidence in God ; for it is the only instance of a proper name being given to a character in one of Jesus' parables. The peril of wealth is here, however, more distinctly indicated. The rich may be self-indulgent and neglectful of the claims of the poor, for the parable does suggest that Lazarus was left unheeded and unrelieved at the rich man's gate. From verse 25 the inference has been drawn that the rich man is represented as in torments simply because he had received his good things in his lifetime, and Lazarus as comforted for no other reason than that he had suffered evil things ; but, as in all the teaching of Jesus, it is not the outward lot, but the inward life, that is the standard of judgment, we must recog-

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nise in our interpretation the difference of moral character suggested. The rich man is condemned for his waste of his wealth in luxury and ostentation; and Lazarus is approved because in all his misery he did not abandon his trust in God. It is surely noteworthy that Jesus presents to us only one soul in anguish, and that is a rich man who used his wealth selfishly and was heedless and heartless towards the needs of others.

(10) How far the renunciation of wealth in the service of need may be required to go is shown by the demand which Jesus made on the rich young ruler. "If thou wouldest be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matt. xix. 21). We need not vie with some expositors in emphasising the exceptionalness of the case, and minimising the demand which Christian discipleship makes. Jesus is not laying down a universal law of discipleship, for that is not His manner of dealing with men; but the incident means at least this, that to

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become perfect some men need the severe discipline of as complete a surrender of earthly goods. If avarice is a peril to a man's soul, he can escape it only by generosity ; the more avaricious he tends to become the more generous ought he to be, if he is to preserve his Christian discipleship. That such a demand was not felt to be an abstract principle, to be honoured in the breach rather than in the observance, but to be concretely applied, when circumstances so required a Christian man to act, is shown by the communism of the primitive community in the enthusiasm and energy of the new life in the Spirit, " Great grace was upon them all. For neither was there any among them that lacked ; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet ; and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need " (Acts iv. 33-35). It is beside the mark to depreciate this behaviour as unsound economically, and as the explanation of the subsequent poverty

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of the Church in Jerusalem, for which there are sufficient other reasons. Had the arrangement not been voluntary it would have lacked moral significance ; and so it cannot be treated as a legal precedent but only as a moral inspiration to self-renunciation to the uttermost wherever love of others makes such a demand.

(11) We have already fully discussed the triumph of Christian love over enmity and persecution ; but this is not the only limitation on love's scope, which Jesus in His teaching removed. For the Jew the neighbour who had any claim upon him was the fellow-countryman, and this exclusiveness, satirised by Juvenal, made the Jews a hated race in the Roman Empire. The Jews despised the Gentiles as dogs ; but it may be just because of the connection in race and the resemblance in religion that the Samaritans were still more hated than the Gentiles. And yet Jesus in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* presents as an example of the neighbourliness He enjoins a hated Samaritan (Luke x. 25-37). The rebuke of Jewish exclusive-

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ness was thus more severe even than if Jesus had represented a Jew as showing kindness to a Samaritan, for an exceptional act of kindness might have seemed to the Jews excusable, while his sense of superiority would have been rather confirmed ; but that the Jew should learn from the Samaritan how to keep the law was an intolerable censure.

We surely do not go beyond the clear teaching of the parable when we find in it the assertion of the universality of Christian love and the service it should be ready to render to human need. The need is the claim on love, and not the race or the religion of the needy. Accordingly, Paul was carrying out the will of the Master when he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, and claimed a place in the Christian Church for the Gentiles without their submission to the Jewish law. This explicit universalism does not go beyond that implicit in the teaching of Jesus. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female ; for ye are all one man in



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Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28, R.V.). The share in the common life in Christ Jesus not only transcends all these differences, but must tend to abolish any inequality or disability that may have resulted from them. To the love which Jesus enjoined, Paul gives only a concrete form, when he represents the Christian Church as one body, in which the members are honoured or suffer together (1 Cor. xii). It is in no way a contradiction of Paul's view when, as in modern thought, this conception of the social organism is extended to the nation, or even to humanity as a whole. We may say, then, that this guiding and inspiring ideal of the social reformer of to-day is already implicit in the teaching of Jesus on love—the services it should render, the obligations it should accept, the sacrifices it should make, and the range of its exercise it should acknowledge.

(12) Were we to trace the course of the history of the Christian Church in its influence on human society, as has been done, for example, in the volume entitled

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“Christ and Civilisation,” we should find a convincing proof that the self-love which Jesus enjoins is not and cannot be selfish. If the teaching of Jesus offers us no scheme of social reconstruction such as socialism offers to us, yet it contains principles of social duty, mutual service, and sacrifice of self for others which, if fully applied to our present conditions, would carry us very far on the way of a social reconstruction, and would demonstrate that a moral and spiritual progress in human society would produce far more beneficent changes than any economic rearrangement could possibly effect without them. To the writer it seems patent that, be socialism economically sound or not, it would be an intolerable tyranny without a social conscience such as Christian love alone can produce; and that if it is to be an expression of personal freedom in social service, it must be based on such advance in Christian love as none but Christ by His grace can effect. The hope for the social order thus lies in the recognition, the application, and the inspiration of

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the principles which Jesus taught—a human brotherhood based on the divine Fatherhood, and having its nature, measure, and example in the love unto self-sacrifice of the Cross of Christ. We must still follow Jesus if we are to enter into the Promised Land of our hopes of social regeneration.

## CHAPTER V

### MUST THE WORLD BE GIVEN UP ?

(1) IN the previous chapters it has been shown that the love which Jesus enjoins is unto self-sacrifice ; for His cause men must endure the worst persecution cheerfully, and in the service of their fellows they must be prepared for any surrender. It is with this maximum demand of the principle of love that the subject with which this chapter deals connects itself. Apart from witness to Him and work for man, does Jesus require self-denial for its own sake, the surrender of earthly good for heavenly gain ; in other words, does He teach asceticism, the suppression of the natural desires in the interests of the higher life of the soul. It is a significant fact that asceticism is closely related to religion. Brahminism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are all ascetic, seeking by the denial of the desires of the flesh to give

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the mastery to the spirit in man. The Hebrew religion shows us the Nazarites ; and, as Paul's argument in Romans xiv. proves, there were Christians who had scruples about the use of meat and wine. Jesus' great forerunner came neither eating meat nor drinking wine, and Jesus was blamed for not following his example, and slandered as "a gluttonous man and a winebibber" (Matt. xi. 18, 19). Very soon in the Christian Church extreme forms of asceticism began to assert themselves. The hermit, to save his soul from the evil that was in the world, fled into the desert, where he lived in prayer and meditation amid many bodily privations. Gradually communities of such hermits were formed, and the system of monasticism gained an assured place in Christian piety. Nay, even the "religious" as distinguished from the "secular" life came to be identified with the monastic practices, and a justification was sought in placing above the *evangelical precepts*, binding upon all Christians, the *evangelical counsels* observed in monasticism. Chastity in the sense of

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celibacy, poverty even as beggary, and obedience to the rules of the order were exalted to the highest place in the pursuit of Christian perfection. It is true that the Reformation rejected the whole system of monasticism ; and in Protestantism generally it is regarded with abhorrence. But even within the Protestant churches there are thoughtful and serious men who are inclined to ask whether some truth may not have been rejected with all the error of monasticism ; whether the worldly ease and comfort, even bodily indulgence and material luxury, which mark the lives of many prosperous professors of the Christian faith, are not a hindrance to spiritual vitality and moral vigour ; whether a measure of self-denial and even self-sacrifice are not conditions of self-development towards perfection of character and spirit. It is then a question worth considering whether Jesus in His teaching does or does not lend countenance to asceticism and monasticism with the renunciation of the world, and the repression of the body.

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(2) As we want to take as complete a survey as possible of all the teaching of Jesus relative to this subject, we may begin with a consideration of the estimate He expresses of the relative spiritual value of riches and poverty. A comparison of Matt. v. 3, 4, 6 with Luke vi. 20, 21, shows that while in the former the reference in the Beatitudes is to spiritual conditions, the meaning of the latter is to be taken literally, as of outward lot. It is not likely that Jesus on separate occasions uttered two sermons having so much in common with so slight differences; and scholars are generally agreed that we have before us in Matt. v. and vii. and Luke vi. 20-49 variant reports of the same discourse, with, in Matthew, the insertion of much later teaching. What is true of the whole is also true of the parts, and so the Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke must be taken as reproductions of the same utterances; and the question arises—in which do we get the original form? The direct mode of address in Luke is more likely to be original than the indirect in Matthew.

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The allusion to the circumstance of the disciples addressed in Luke is also more probable than the statement of general principle in Matthew. It was according to Matthew's intention and practice to treat the occasional utterances of Jesus as formal legislation for the Christian community as the new Israel, of which Jesus Himself was the new Moses, and to adapt them for that purpose; and accordingly we may regard Luke's version of the Beatitudes as the original.

If the woes which follow in Luke (vi. 24-26) are also authentic, as we have every reason to believe that they are, then it becomes clear that Jesus did regard poverty as advantageous and wealth as perilous to the spiritual life. The same lesson is taught, as we have already seen, in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31). The rich man is self-indulgent, callous, and indifferent; the poor man puts his trust in God. The warning against the perils of wealth is repeated in the teaching about covetousness, illustrated by the Parable of the Rich



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Fool (Luke xii. 13-21). "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Nay, even it is indicated that he who is eager and busy about laying up treasures for himself, runs a great risk of not being "rich toward God." Man is incapable of a divided interest and effort. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). Jesus made a practical application of this principle in the case of the rich young ruler. Because in His judgment it was "easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God," impossible with man, though possible with God (Matt. xix. 24-26), He required the surrender of all the ruler's wealth that he might become a disciple. We cannot escape the conclusion that Jesus did regard riches as a hindrance to goodness and godliness.

(3) While He, on the contrary, regarded poverty not only as no hindrance but even

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as a help to dependence on and submission to God, lest wrong inferences be drawn from that teaching, we must here add two considerations. On the one hand, the poverty which He had in view was the kind of poverty of which Livingstone was thinking when he described himself as sprung from "poor and honest parents." It was straitness of means requiring strict economy, and even involving some want and hardship, but not the misery, squalor, and hopelessness of the poverty which is so threatening a feature of our modern society. Jesus was not thinking of the physical deterioration and moral degradation which result from poverty in modern conditions; that assuredly He could never have pronounced blessed. On the other hand, as we have already seen, He urged the duty of philanthropy. He assumed that the hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the sick and the prisoners visited and tended. The condemnation of the rich man is due to his neglect of the claims of Lazarus's need upon him. His own ministry was one of healing, comfort, and help. The

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interpretation of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "That thou doest do quickly," by some of the disciples, that Jesus was bidding Judas "give something to the poor" (John xiii. 27-29), shows that out of His own poverty Jesus was in the habit of giving alms. Jesus' teaching gives no encouragement to any neglect of the needs of others, or any tolerance of the evil conditions which now constitute "poverty."

(4) In this connection we may consider a charge which has been brought against Jesus. It is said that if we follow Him closely in His indifference to outward conditions, in His preference for poverty over riches, we shall despise and suspect all culture and civilisation. Emphasis is laid on the absence from His teaching and life of any interest in literature, science, art, industry, commerce, government. If we care only for the things He cared for, we must condemn as worthless, if not evil, our material progress, our mental development, much—if not most—of what constitutes the life of even Christian men and

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nations to-day ; we must ask, Is civilisation wrong and culture a mistake? To this charge a threefold answer can be given.

In *the first place*, Jesus had a vocation to fulfil in a very short period of ministry as Revealer of God and Redeemer of man, that required the utmost concentration of His thought and life. He had a baptism to be baptised with, and He was straitened, and necessarily straitened, until it was accomplished (Luke xii. 50). Diffusion of interest and effort results and must result in inefficiency in any pursuit, while concentration of thought and toil on any task is the condition of its best accomplishment. As unique as was His vocation, so unique was His qualification for it. As the Son alone knowing the Father, He alone could make the Father known. As meek and lowly in heart, He alone could impart to others the secret of rest of soul (Matt. xi. 25-30). His work no other could do ; and He had to finish the work before the night came, when no man can work (John ix. 4). For the tasks of civilisation and culture

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there were other workers. In God's world there was need and room for the intellectual genius of Greece and the practical genius of Rome, as well as for the spiritual genius of Israel, of which Jesus was the supreme embodiment (stating the claim in the lowest terms, lower far than Christian faith demands). It is unreasonable to ask that Jesus should have discharged all human functions to the neglect of that function which He alone could discharge.

*Secondly*, the circumstances of His ministry precluded contact with, and attention to, the tasks of culture and civilisation. Within His surroundings Jesus showed an open eye and a wide heart. The parables show His observation of nature and human life and work ; even the play of children was not beneath His notice (Matt. xi. 16, 17), and in the range of interest so displayed Jesus compares favourably with Paul, who moved in so much more varied an environment, physical and human.

*Thirdly*, the revelation of God He gave, and the redemption of man He offered, so far from hindering the interests and pur-

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suits of the wider life of man, give to them a loftier ideal and a greater inspiration. The man who sees God as Father, in, through, and over all, and who knows himself a child of God, delivered from sin and evil, developing in holiness towards the likeness of God, destined for immortality, glory, and blessedness, will be not less but more fit to search after the world's furthest meaning and to gain the world's fullest worth. Fidelity to the Gospel has not in human history involved hostility to these wider interests and pursuits.

(5) What limitations and qualifications of these interests and pursuits the Christian life demands, we shall be in a better position to determine when we have considered what support, if any, Jesus' teaching gives to monasticism and asceticism. Monasticism relied especially on the *evangelical counsels*; the sayings, already noted, about eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom (Matt. xix. 12), together with the demand to abandon all earthly relationships with a view to, and in order to meet all the claims of, discipleship (Matt. viii.

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21, 22), are supposed to enforce celibacy. The claim of Jesus to the unreserved obedience of His disciples is regarded as justifying the monastic vow of obedience. The teaching of Jesus regarding the manner of their mission when He sent forth the twelve (Matt. x. 9-10) was the warrant claimed by the orders of begging friars. But it is evident that in all these cases we have to take into account the special circumstances. Jesus nowhere enjoins celibacy as more meritorious than marriage. While His own vocation involved for Him freedom from these earthly bonds, yet His teaching on the family and the indissoluble bond, according to the Creator's intention, in marriage (Matt. xix. 4-6) point in an entirely different direction. Paul, himself a celibate as far as we can judge from the imperfect evidence, and inclined only because of "the present distress" to encourage others to follow his example (1 Cor. vii. 1-40), yet compares the relation of Christ and His Church to that of the husband and wife (Eph. v. 22-33), and exhorts to a Christian cleansing and hallowing

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of the family relations (Eph. vi. 1-4). We shall afterwards consider the extent to which Christian discipleship may involve self-denial, even as regards the family relationships ; but, meanwhile, it may be stated that there is nothing in Jesus' teaching that makes celibacy generally obligatory. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the position of the advocates of celibacy is the suggestion of one of the Fathers that marriage is good in so far as it provides offspring who may dedicate themselves to virginity. It need not be pointed out that there is a *non sequitur* in the argument from the obedience due to Jesus Himself to the obedience due to a monastic head.

The directions given by Jesus to His disciples when He sent them forth on their mission (Matt. x. 5-15) have no relevance to the permanent obligations of Christian discipleship. He was sending them to herald the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven to a people eagerly waiting for that announcement, and ready to welcome the messengers, and to give them



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such hospitality as they might require. While one instruction does contemplate the possibility of a hostile reception (verses 14, 15), another (verse 11) assumes that there might even be rivalry in showing them kindness. The mission was planned for only a very short time, and the arrangements made for it necessarily bore a temporary character. Where there are similar conditions, and where the interests of the Kingdom clearly demand that the same or a like course should be followed, the disciple's duty is clear—to face need and hardship; but it is certain Jesus was not, in these counsels, founding a permanent institution.

For it may be further urged that a course of action necessary or desirable under special circumstances cannot be regarded as universally obligatory; and still less, if the universal obligation is not insisted on, can it be represented as specially meritorious in those who may adopt it voluntarily. Jesus calls all His disciples to the highest kind of discipleship which their vocation in their circumstances

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demands ; and no kind can be regarded as more meritorious than another. That celibacy, the abandonment of family, obedience, poverty, and beggary cannot be universally obligatory on all Christian disciples is quite obvious. If all beg, who shall have the wherewithal to give alms ? If none marry, how can a Christian society be maintained ? If all obey, who shall command ? That there may be special circumstances in which any or all of these courses may be duty need not be denied. But what has here to be insisted on is that universal observance would involve the dissolution of the Christian society, and that to set up as an ideal of a higher type of discipleship a kind of life which would involve such a consequence, and so could not be commended to or required of all Christians, is a contradiction of the Christian ideal, which does not, and cannot, recognise more and less meritorious types of discipleship, giving only to a few the privilege of the higher type, and relegating the many to the lower type. As regards the institution of monasticism and the

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practices it involves, no sanction is given to it by the teaching of Jesus.

(6) In regard to asceticism, it must, *first of all*, be pointed out that the slander against Himself to which Jesus refers (Matt. xi. 19) was based on, as He indicates, the contrast of His practice with that of John the Baptist. The attempt to make out that the wine used by Jesus was unfermented wine is, in the writer's judgment, quite "a forlorn hope"; and as a total abstainer himself, he feels no need to justify by any such assumption his own practice, which seems to him a direct and urgent application, in the existing conditions of extreme peril from the "drink" habit, of the general principle of avoiding all possible offence to self or neighbour. But whatever answer might be given to the question of the kind of wine used by Jesus, His use of it at all, conjoined with His partaking of flesh, shows that He did not follow the recognised ascetic practices of His surroundings. His presence at feasts also shows that He did not approve such practices.

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*Secondly*, His teaching regarding the absolute demand of God on every soul for the love of the whole personality, including His seemingly hard saying, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10), excludes the conception of *works of supererogation*—that is, works which, as not universally obligatory, are of special merit. As we shall immediately see, there may be a self-denial and self-sacrifice necessary to preserve the soul from ruin, and so obligatory; but such practice can never be regarded as meritorious.

*Thirdly*, while Jesus demanded purity of heart (Matt. v. 8), condemned even the lustful look upon a woman as adultery in the heart (verse 28), and required in this connection the avoidance of moral peril at the greatest conceivable cost (verses 29, 30); while we may be sure He did not make excuses for fleshly sins, such as the drama and the novel of to-day too frequently make, yet it may be pointed out that

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His attitude towards different kinds of sin contradicts the assumption of asceticism, that the animal appetites are most perilous to the soul. His warnings against, and His denunciations of, Pharisaism, prove that He regarded the sins of the inner life—self-conceit, self-righteousness, pride, censoriousness—just the sins which have often accompanied the practice of asceticism in the reputed saints, as most perilous, because most secret and subtle, most capable of taking on the disguise of goodness and godliness, and so of escaping the moral judgment of self and others. Whereas the sins of the flesh, as more manifest, as more exposed to the censure of the common conscience, seemed to Him as less likely to cut off the desire for, and the effort at, moral recovery. This conclusion is surely justified if we consider all that is involved in His treatment of the sinful woman in the house of the Pharisee (Luke vii. 36-50). When the spirit gains the mastery of the flesh, the animal appetites can be subdued; but Pharisaism is a malady of the spirit itself; in it the very

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springs of moral renewal have become polluted.

(7) While asceticism as outward observance gains no support whatever from the teaching of Jesus, we must not ignore the prominence He gives and the importance He attaches to self-denial and self-sacrifice. If eye, or hand, or foot is a peril to our own soul (Matt. v. 29, 30), or makes us prove a stumbling-block to others (xviii. 7-9), it must be cut off. While it is difficult to decide whether the saying was used in both contexts, or only the latter, the double reference is quite a legitimate inference, for surely if a man is bound to make any sacrifice to avoid leading another into sin, no less an obligation rests on him to avoid sin for himself. In Christian discipleship there must be a readiness to endure hardship, to abandon human relationships which would hinder entire devotion, and to withstand any distraction from the path of duty. The homelessness of the Son of Man must be shared; the dead must be left to bury their dead; the hand must not be withdrawn from the plough

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(Luke ix. 57-62). The family ties must be severed if the following of Jesus demand so great a sacrifice. "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). This renunciation of home and kindred Jesus Himself made when His mother and brethren sought to restrain Him in His ministry. Looking around on His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark iii. 34, 35). If we think of the tenderness and kindness of Jesus, we may be sure that this demand of the surrender of the natural affections to the interests of the Kingdom of God was felt by Jesus Himself as the greatest sacrifice which could be required. In comparison with it the demand to give up wealth, which He made on the rich young ruler (Matt. xix. 21, 22) would appear to him easy, although He too recognised how hard it must appear to one who clung to

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riches. Even life itself must be surrendered if duty so demanded. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, for whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matt. xvi. 24-26). There is no bodily appetite, no worldly good, no human relationship, which is not to be surrendered for goodness and for God; life itself is to be offered up for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus lived what He taught; and His Cross (whether He had that form of death clearly in view as appointed unto Himself or not when He used the words about cross-bearing) is the sacred symbol, because it is the supreme example of the self-denial and self-sacrifice which is the characteristic of the Christian life always and everywhere.

(8) It may at first sight appear as if the modern world did not offer the oppor-



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tunity for and impose the obligation of cross-bearing in the Christian believer. On this subject a few considerations may, in closing this discussion, be urged. *In the first place*, it is confessed that in many professing Christians there is a lowered spiritual vitality and a lessened moral vigour. Is not this due to the ease and comfort, luxury and even self-indulgence which the material prosperity of our modern society allows? For self-development, morally and religiously, self-discipline is necessary; and there is little doubt that self-denial and even self-sacrifice are conditions of progress in goodness and godliness. As the athlete in training does deny himself pleasures he would otherwise enjoy, so the Christian who wants to be strong and brave should practice a measure of self-denial even as regards lawful enjoyments. To endure a great temptation a man must prepare himself by constant self-control; and it is not an illegitimate asceticism for a man to endure some hardness voluntarily, that he may be fit and able to withstand when the evil day comes upon him.

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*Secondly*, there can be no doubt that the abundant resources of our modern culture and civilisation, with the varied interests and pursuits which they make possible, tend to dissipate the energies of the soul so as to prevent that concentration on, absorption in, and dedication to the highest life which is possible to man, the life of goodness in God. While it is true that all these boons come to us from the Father of Lights, yet in the use and enjoyment of them we may lose the Giver in the gifts. One is sometimes tempted to wish that our material, and even intellectual progress, had been less, for our moral and religious steps seem to lag behind. It is a serious problem for Christians to-day, how to possess the world for their gain, and not to be possessed by the world for their loss. It is well to cultivate a spirit of detachment, so that, while we use and enjoy all these goods, we could do without them if higher claims required our surrender of them. Here again a limitation of desire voluntarily, for the sake of the soul's independence, is

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not an illegitimate asceticism but a lawful self-discipline. Mammon is so much more dangerous a rival of God to-day, because so many of his allurements are in themselves so good; and the Christian disciple to-day needs more than ever the warning of Jesus "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth."

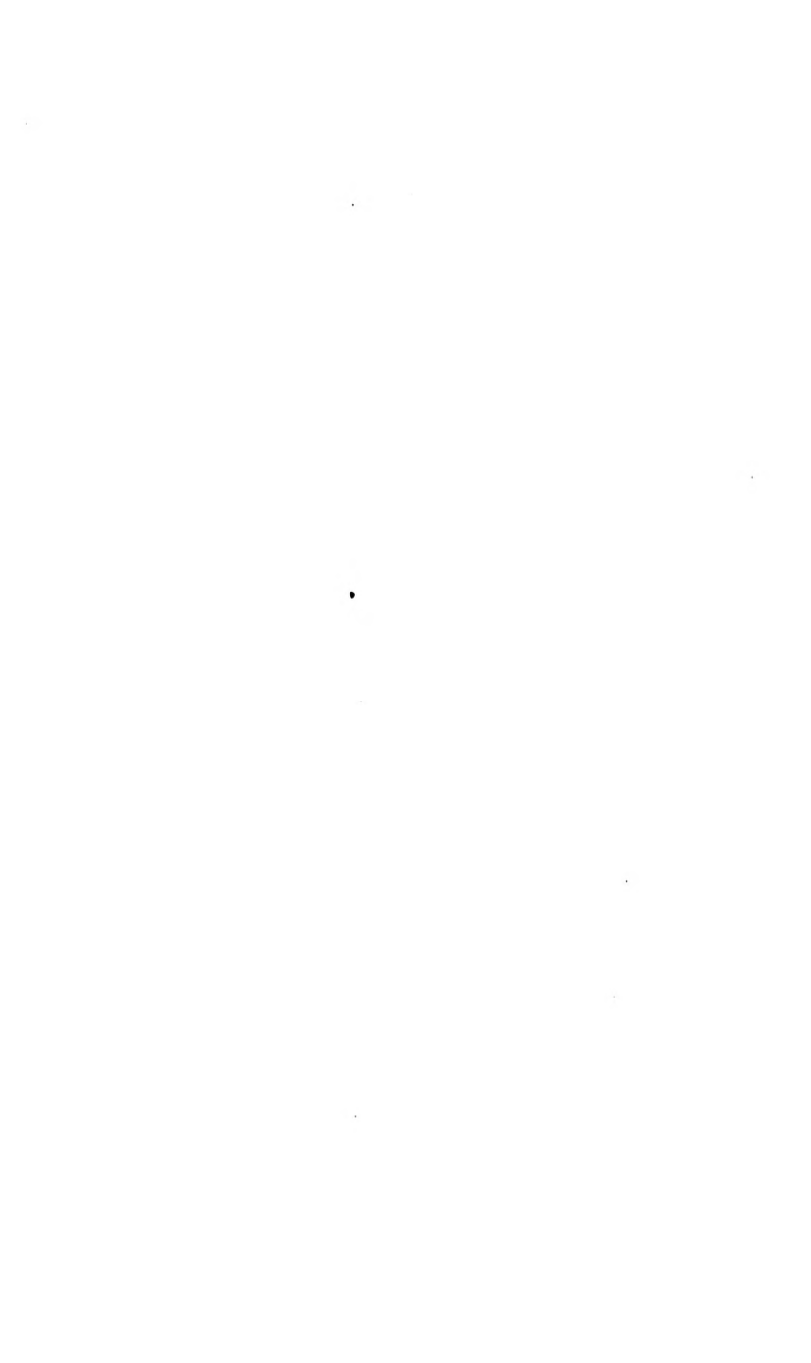
*Lastly*, even our modern society offers, if we had only the eyes to see it, the need and room for self-denial and self-sacrifice. How is the social problem to be solved? How is the Gospel to be carried to the ends of the earth? How is all mankind to be brought into the Kingdom of God? These questions cannot be answered, unless the Christian Church is once more possessed, transformed, and controlled by the sacrificial love of God in Jesus Christ. Self-denial and self-sacrifice there must be if the world is to be redeemed unto God. Jesus calls to no artificial asceticism, but to a real bearing of the cross in the fellowship with and following of Him.

## Conclusion

THE writing of the previous chapters has deepened in the author the conviction that what the Christian Church needs to-day is the kind of discipleship which has been described in these pages—the coming to, learning from, companioning with, and following of Jesus. That is as possible to-day as in the days of His earthly ministry, for the historical Jesus and the living Christ of the Christian faith are one and the same Saviour and Lord. Paul's aspiration "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10), may be ours, with even the fuller content that the knowledge and study of the Gospels can give to this personal communion.



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